

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 111416Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 572

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1802

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT IS JO

SUBJ: GOVERNMENT DUE TO CONFRONT QADOUM

REF: A) 75 TEL AVIV 7756; B) 75 TEL AVIV 8042

SUMMARY: THE STATUS OF THE UNAUTHORIZED WEST BANK SETTLEMENT TRANSFERRED LAST DECEMBER FROM SEBASTIA TO QADOUM CONSTITUTES "UNFINISHED BUSINESS" WHICH MAY PROVIDE A CRITICAL TEST FOR THE RABIN GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH THE LABOR PARTY MIGHT WISH TO DELAY HAVING TO CONFRONT WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A NO-WIN DILEMMA, BOTH THE NRP AND MAPAM CAN BE EXPECTED TO PRESS FOR A CABINET DISCUSSION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. SOME OBSERVERS ARE PREDICTING A COMPROMISE WITH THE ROLE OF PERES POSSIBLY PROVING DECISIVE  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL CONFRONT THE ISSUE OF UNAUTHORIZED WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS. A GROUP OF ABOUT THIRTY GUSH ENUNIM ACTIVISTS HAS BEEN LOCATED IN AN ARMY CAMP AT QADOUM SINCE DEC8, WHEN A COMPROMISE WAS REACHED WHICH REMOVED THE SETTLERS FROM THEIR PREFERRED LOCATION AT SEBASTIA  
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AND PROMISED A CABINET DISCUSSION "WITHIN TWO OR THREE MONTHS"

ON WEST BANK SETTLEMENT POLICY (REF A). THE EXPECTED DISCUSSION OF THE QADOUM QUESTION IS NOW BEING SEEN AS AN INDICATION OF LIKELY FUTURE ISRAELI POLICY TOWARD THE WEST BANK.

2. RABIN HAS SAID HIS DECISION CONCERNING THE DECEMBER COMPROMISE WAS BASED ON THREE CONSIDERATIONS: (1) C-OF-S GUR ESTIMATED THAT 5,000 IDF SOLDIERS WOULD BE REQUIRED FORCIBLY TO EVICT THE SETTLERS, WHO WERE ARMED; (2) THE SPECTRE OF INTERNECINE WARFARE AT TIME WHEN ISRAEL AND ZIONISM WERE UNDER SHART ATTACK ABROAD WOULD BE POLITICALLY DEVASTING FOR ISRAEL; AND (3) COMING ON THE HEELS OF PRESS DISCUSSION OF US CONCERN ABOUT SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, A DECISION TO REMOVE THE SETTLERS WOULD HAVE APPEARED TO THE ISRAELI PUBLIC TO BE CAPITULATION TO AMERICAN PRESSURE.

3. ANTICIPATING THE EXPECTED CABINET DISCUSSION EXTREME POSITIONS HAVE PREDICTABLY BEEN STAKED OUT BY THE NRP (PRIMARILY ITS YOUTH WING) AND MAPAM. NRP YOUNG GUARD LEADER BEN-MEIR HAS SAID PUBLICLY THAT THE NRP WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO REMAIN IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD FORCIBLY REMOVE AN "EXISTING" JEWISH SETTLEMENT. HE ALSO SAID THAT A DECISION TO EVICT THE QADOUM SETTLERS WOULD RESULT IN A DECLINE OF CINFIDENCE IN DEFMIN PERES: "I DO NOT SEE HOW HE COULD REMAIN THE GOVERNMENT".

4. MAPAM, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS REPORTEDLY URGING RABIN "TO UPHOLD LAW AND ORDER" BY REMOVING WHAT IT VIEWS AS AN ILLEGAL CHALLENGE TO GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY. PERES AGAIN IS CRITICIZED: THE PARTY'S YOUTH COMMITTEE HAS PUBLICLY ACCUSED HIM OF COLLUDING WITH GUSH EMUNIM TO ESTABLISH PERMANENT SETTLEMENTS AT MAALE EDUMIN AND OFRA PRIOR TO GOVERNMENT APPROVAL.IT SEES HIS HAND AGAIN BEHIND DEVELOPMENTS AT QADOUM AND CLAIMS HE HAS AUTHORIZED THE IDF TO ASSIST THE SETTLERS THERE, DESPITE THE ILLEGALITY OF THEIR PRESENCE, AND IS MISLEADING THE GOVERNMENT AS TO WHAT IS OCCURRING. MAPAM MINISTERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN THEIR OPPOSITION TO QADOUM WHEN THE SUBJECT IS DISCUSSED, WITH SOME PARTY LEADERS REPORTEDLY ADVOCATING WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ALIGNMENT SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT ALLOW THE SETTLEMENT TO REMAIN.

5. PERES ON MARCH 10 CAME OUT PUBLICLY IN FAVOR OF ALLOWING THE SETTLERS TO REMAIN AT QADOUM. ADDRESSING STUDENTS AT BAR ILAN  
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UNIVERSITY, HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT "A MAJORITY WILL BE FOUND IN THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD SUPPORT THE RIGHT OF THE SETTLERS TO REMAIN WHERE THEY ARE. I AM FOR IT... WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SETTLE IN BOTH (JUDEA AND SAMARIA) SO LONG AS WE DO NOT DEPRIVE THE ARABS, AND TAKE THEIR SENSITIVITIES INTO ACCOUNT".

6. THE HEAD OF THE MAPAM KIBBUTZ FEDERATION AND A LONG TIME PARTY LEADER (NATHAN PELED) HAS TOLD US HE FORSEES RABIN

RESORTING TO YET ANOTHER COMPROMISE: HE MIGHT ALLOW THE SETTLEMENT TO REMAIN, WHILE IMPOSING AN UPPER LIMIT ON ITS POPULATION AND DECLARING THAT NO ADDITIONAL SETTLEMENTS WILL BE PERMITTED IN SAMARIA. PELED SAID HE THOUGHT THAT MAPAM WOULD PROBABLY GO ALONG WITH SUCH A COMPROMISE RATHER THAN RISK SPLITTING THE ALIGNMENT, SINCE ANY GOVERNMENT THAT MIGHT REPLACE THE PRESENT ONE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SUPPORT AN EVEN MORE ACTIVE SETTLEMENT POLICY IN THE TERRITORIES.

7. HOWEVER, THE HEAD OF A LABOR PARTY KIBBUTZ FEDERATION (ROSOLIO) BELIEVES THAT EVEN SUCH A COMPROMISE SOLUTION WOULD PRESENT GUSH ENUNIM WITH A GREATER VICTORY THAN ANYONE IN THE GOVERNING COALITION DESIRES. HE NEVERTHELESS AGREES THAT THE PRESENT IS NOT A GOOD TIME FOR A SHOWDOWN WITH THE GUSH AND THAT RABIN WOULD PROBABLY PREFER TO DELAY, IF FORCED TO CONFRONT THE ISSUE, HOWEVER, RABIN MIGHT RESORT TO COMPROMISE.

8. COMMENT: QADOUM PRESENTS A TRULY NO-WIN DILEMMA FOR RABIN. A DECISION TO EVICT THE SETTLERS WOULD RAISE THE SPECTRE OF ARMED HOSTILITIES BETWEEN JEWS AND COULD CAUSE THE RESIGNATION OF ONE OR MORE NRP MINISTERS, BUT ALLOWING THE SETTLEMENT TO REMAIN AT QADOUM WOULD FURTHER ENHANCE THE REPUTATION OF THE INCREASINGLY ASSERTIVE GUSH EMUNIM AND COULD TOUCH OFF A DIVISION WITHIN MAPAM. AT LEAST ONE OFFICIAL CLOSE TO RABIN HAS RECOMMENDED A QUICK SURGICAL OPERATION, WITH THE IDF REMOVING THE SETTLERS WITHOUT ADVANCE PUBLICITY. THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE VISIBLE COOPERATION OF PERES IN THE DECISION, HOWEVER, AND WE DOUBT THAT THIS COULD BE OBTAINED.

9. PERES' POSITION WILL PROBABLY PROVE CRITICAL. ON THE ONE HAND, HIS MARCH 10 STATEMENT REPORTED ABOVE REFLECTS HIS OWN SYMPATHIES WITH THE AIM OF THE SETTLERS. IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE HIM ASSUMING MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR ORDERING IDF TROOPS

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TO REMOVE THEM. ON THE OTHER HAND, PERES' PROSPECTS OF BECOMING PRIME MINISTER IN THE FUTURE DEPEND ON HIS STANDING WITHIN THE LABOR PARTY AND IT IS UNLIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT HE WOULD WANT TO LEAVE HIMSELF VULNERABLE TO THE CHARGE OF HAVING ADVOCATED OUTRIGHT CAPITULATION TO THE DEMANDS OF THE GUSH EMUNIM. HE THEREFORE MAY WELL ATTEMPT TO MAINTAIN A VISIBLE DISTANCE FROM WHATEVER DECISION IS MADE AND TO ENSURE THAT RABIN BEARS THE BURDEN ALONE.

10. ON BALANCE, AND IF INDEFINITE DELAY PROVES IMPOSSIBLE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE SAFEST COURSE AVAILABLE TO RABIN IS A COMPROMISE ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED ABOVE BY PELED. COMING AFTER RABIN'S STRONG STATEMENTS AGAINST GUSH EMUNIM (REF B), THIS COULD ADD TO HIS GROWING REPUTATION FOR VACILLATION, BUT IT WOULD REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISRUPTION OF EITHER WING OF

HIS COALITION.  
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## Message Attributes

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